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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000675

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: ATTACK ON GRAIDA AMIS CAMP

Classified By: Political Officer Ron Capps for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Civilians damaged equipment on an AMIS camp in Graidia with SLA encouragement and support. The SLA has violated the Humanitarian Ceasfire Agreement (HCA) and personal agreements forged between its leaders and AMIS by refusing to vacate the town. Graidia's importance is in its position along a main trade route and atop a major aquifer. Personnel, equipment, and training shortfalls significantly hindered the AMIS response to the incident. End Summary.

AMIS Reports 1,000 Civilians Overrun Graidia MGS

¶2. (C) African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) Sector 2 (Nyala) Commander Colonel ML Raji reported to AMIS headquarters on March 14 that the Military Observer Group Site (MGS) in Graidia was invaded by a group of civilians "estimated to be over 1000." Colonel Raji's report claimed the civilians were persuaded to enter and damage property on MGS Graidia by the local Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) commander, Ibrahim Tuka Wara, as part of a continuing SLA campaign to drive AMIS out of Graidia. For its part, AMIS has repeatedly instructed the SLA to withdraw from Graidia. The SLA has agreed to do so, but has yet to move. This standoff has been place since at least June 2005.

¶3. (C) International observers on MGS Graidia during the incident said the number of civilians involved was "about 200."

Graidia as a Battleground

¶4. (C) Graidia sits atop one of Darfur's few (awkward) and largest aquifers. Wells in the area are numerous and supply abundant water even during the depths of the dry season. The AMIS Ceasefire Commission and AMIS forces from Sector 2 have repeatedly tried to help the local tribesmen sort out their differences since late 2004. Chiefs of the Massalit tribe, the predominate non-Arab tribe, told our Assistant Defense Liaison Officer in the spring of 2005 that South Darfur Wali Engineer El Hajj al Matan had taken a personal interest in keeping the Massalit and the Rezeigat, the predominate Arab tribes in the area, from reconciling.

¶5. (C) The SLA moved into Graidia in June of 2005 following a dust-up between the SLA and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in nearby Muhajeriyah. The SLA more or less chased the JEM out of the area and, once they held Graidia, has refused to relinquish it, despite numerous skirmishes between SLA and

JEM and between SLA and organized pro-Government militias. A partial reconciliation between the Berti, Zaghawa, and Massalit (non-Arab) tribes and the Rezeigat (Arab) tribe in the Marlla areas has lowered tensions between the tribes, even in Graidia.

SLA Supported the Incident

¶16. (C) According to Colonel Raji's report, and other internal but unofficial AMIS reports, the incident began when two truckloads of SLA fighters and two of civilians arrived outside MGS Graidia. The civilians "forced their way through the main gate, threw stones at AU personnel, damaged AU property, pulled down the perimeter security (Note: razor wire. End note.) fence, and set fire to some mattresses." A separate report claims the civilians also pulled down the radio antenna.

¶17. (C) It is clear from Raji's report and from other internal AMIS reporting that SLA commander Tuka Wara instigated the incident. It would seem likely that Tuka Wara provided the trucks for the civilians - many of whom came from the internally displaced persons' (IDP) camp nearby and from Joghana, another SLA-controlled village.

Bad Blood Between SLA and AMIS

¶18. (C) The SLA want AMIS out of Graidia because the SLA's refusal to vacate Graidia is a violation of the Humanitarian Cease Fire Agreement and of a personal agreement brokered between former AMIS Force Commander MG Okonkwo and the

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then-Southern Area SLA Commander, Hassan Salah. Salah and Okonkwo agreed in the summer of 2005 that if AMIS would come to Graidia, the SLA would withdraw.

¶19. (C) This is not the first SLA incursion onto MGS Graidia. On November 15, 2005, Tuka Wara and his troops assaulted the camp and beat the MGS site's Arabic interpreter for allegedly divulging SLA secrets to AMIS.

¶110. (C) Twice in early February, the 3rd and 7th, approximately 50 civilian women from Graidia demonstrated in front of the MGS, carrying signs calling for AMIS to leave.

¶111. (C) A few days later Graidia civilians stoned an AMIS helicopter.

¶112. (C) On February 25, local lower-level SLA commanders accused AMIS of smuggling local non-Arab women on to the camp and to the Sector headquarters in Nyala for sex.

Poor AMIS Performance

¶113. (C) The AMIS troops failed to carry out what is certainly the clearest part of their Rules of Engagement - to protect AU personnel and property. Equipment, personnel, and training shortages all played a role.

¶114. (C) The MGS interpreter was off camp, on a MILOB patrol. The commander did not speak Arabic and had difficulty communicating with the civilians involved in the incident. When an Arabic-speaking MILOB was found, the crowd did not want to work with him because he was an Egyptian officer and thought to be too closely linked to the Government of Sudan.

¶115. (C) After the MGS HF radio antenna was pulled down, the Commander had no direct communications with his higher (Sector) headquarters in Nyala or with AMIS Forward

headquarters in El Fashir. His Thuraya phone had been sent to El Fashir for repair - he had no redundant system. He finally was able to borrow the CivPol commander's Thuraya.

¶16. (C) Finally, retired western military officers on the scene commented later that the protection force troops were unsure of their Rules of Engagement. One officer said there had been no base defense training since the base was created.

Comment

¶17. (C) Graidia's importance to commerce (it sits on the road between Buram and Nyala), and its geographic position atop the aquifer mean it will regularly be a source of friction between tribes. The SLA's refusal to abide by its agreements is unacceptable, and significantly raises the likelihood of friction boiling over into violent clashes.
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